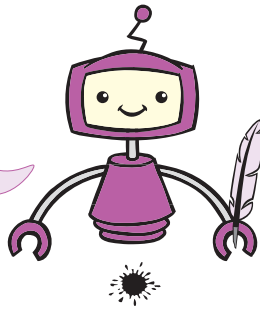


This fabulous life

What are the defining themes of your life so far? What makes you who you are? What passions drive you? What interests consume you? Let's find out by writing the story of your life!



LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 9
Learning Object 4: *Volunteer duty*

PRIOR LEARNING:

Stage 2

Module 17 Work Sheet 2: *An excerpt from the book of Zak*
Module 18 Work Sheet 6: *Writing a recount*

Stage 3

Module 9 Work Sheet 4: *Life writing*

1 It's all about me

In Work Sheet 4, *Life writing*, you read a short example of memoir writing by Lisa.

In this work sheet, you'll be guided through the process of writing a similar, short piece of life writing, in Indonesian.

Before we begin, let's think about some writing techniques you can use to make your writing engaging and exciting for the reader.

The power of detail

When you are writing about people, places, events or objects, your goal is often to help the reader imagine them vividly and to feel as if they are real.

One of the simplest techniques for making your writing vivid and real is to use concrete and specific detail, instead of general descriptions.

For example, instead of writing that someone was attractive, you might say that they were tall, with dark hair and a lopsided grin.

The lure of story

Life writing is a form of narrative, so it is important to include events or actions in your story. The narrative elements are the sections of your writing that give it colour and movement. Long-winded descriptions, on the other hand, can obscure the point of your story and lose the reader's attention.

Instead of describing a garden, describe someone walking through the garden, or playing there, while including some details that bring the garden to life.

The perils of purple prose

Sometimes, when you are first learning to write creatively, you can fall into the trap of using the fanciest, most elaborate and flowery words and phrases you can think of. This is called writing 'purple prose'.

Most of the time, even in creative writing, it is better to stick to plain, everyday language to tell your story. Elaborate language can get in the way of the story, distracting the reader or even confusing them.

One way to think about the power of writing clearly is to think about writing as a gift. When we write a story, we should aim to think less about the pleasure the writing gives us than the pleasure it will give the reader. If an elaborate, fussy metaphor really pleases us but is like a difficult riddle for the reader, we are really pleasing ourselves at the reader's expense.

This is why you often hear the advice to writers to 'kill your darlings'. This is advice that encourages you to edit out the bits of writing that give you pleasure, but would impede the reader's understanding and emotional engagement.

When you think about it, this is great news if you're writing in a second language! After all, it means you don't need an enormous vocabulary to write a moving and engaging piece of work.

Exercise 1

Preparation

In this work sheet, you will be writing your own short memoir, in Indonesian, using the model that Lisa used to write her piece, *My (volunteering) life*, in Work Sheet 4, *Life writing*.

In other words, you are going to write a piece for a regular column in which readers are invited to write using the title *My life*. Every person who sends in a piece of writing chooses a theme for their piece, which they place in the title's parentheses. For example: *My (gardening) life*, *My (learning) life*, *My (walking) life*.

The first step is to come up with as many ideas as you can for that central word, which will be the theme of your memoir.

- 1.1** Think about who you are as a person, and what you have experienced in your life so far. Are there particular activities, interests or experiences that you think might interest a reader? What are the 'themes' of your life?

Complete the titles below by coming up with as many theme words as you can for your memoir, in Indonesian.

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

Hidup saya (_____)

- 1.2** Highlight or circle one title from your ideas that you would like to use for your memoir. Choose the idea that you think is the most interesting or one that is unique.

Exercise 2

Planning

Now that you have chosen a theme to work on, you can begin to flesh out the plan for your memoir.

Using the structure below, come up with some ideas for what to include in each paragraph.

You can write your planning notes in Indonesian, English or a combination of both. Keep in mind, however, that your final piece will be written in Indonesian.

Make sure to include at least one anecdote (short story) you can use, and some notes about concrete, specific images that will bring your memoir to life.

The memoir you read in Work Sheet 4 was eight paragraphs long. You only need to write six paragraphs. Some of your paragraphs might be quite short, but aim to write about 300 words in total.

Paragraph 1	
Paragraph 2	
Paragraph 3	

(continued on following page)

Paragraph 4	
Paragraph 5	
Paragraph 6	

